

Massachusetts College of Art

Division of Art Education

Graduate Programs

Expanding Unconscious Sources; A Return to My Inner Self

by

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This book is dedicated to all those who undertake an inward journey. May your travels be as fruitful and nourishing as mine have been.

I want to thank my advisor, Lowry Burgess, for invaluable aid. My husband Carl and son Gabriel were wonderfully encouraging and tolerant for long hours during these years. Thank you also to Jed, Jamie, Elise, Sarah, and Phyllis, who listened so responsively, and to Janice for typing these thousands of words. And to my ancestors, both genetic and spiritual, my gratitude.

Background

I was born in 1945 in St. Louis, Missouri. I studied art at Washington University (St. Louis) from 1964 – 1968 and received a B.F.A. in painting from the School of Fine Arts there in 1968. While at Washington University, I studied painting with Arthur Osver and David Lund (of New York City) and printmaking with Fred Becker. In the summer of 1967 I studied with Victor Candell and Leo Manso in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

After graduation I attended Queens College (New York) graduate school in painting, studying with James Brooks and Marvin Bileck. From 1970 – 76 I continued painting, selling my work privately. I taught art to children aged 6 –16 from 1971- 76 in private schools in the Washington, D.C. area, and received teacher certification for grades K –12 from the University of Maryland in 1975.

In 1978 I enrolled in the Master's of Science program in Art Education at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, Massachusetts. This thesis is in partial fulfillment of the master's degree in art education.

Preface How to Read This Book

The text of this thesis is in three columns. Column I is a transcript of a taped conversation between me, my husband, Carl Banner, and our friend Sarah Sinnott. Column II amplifies Column I with excerpts from my Journal, quotations from other sources, and my own commentary on the material covered in the dialogue. Column III provides further resonances, sometimes in the nature of commentary, sometimes as further quotations, and sometimes as references to material in the reproduction section, appendices, or bibliography.

The organization into three columns is meant to be felt as harmony and counterpoint. Although the order of the chapters is chronological, the material expands in a non-linear way. The reader can start at any point in the thesis and go in any direction.

“Return”

“The light principle returns: thus the hexagram counsels turning away from the confusion of external things, turning back to one’s inner light. There, in the depths of the soul, one sees the Divine, the One. It is only germinal, no more than a beginning, a potentiality, but as such clearly to be distinguished from all objects. To know this One means to know oneself in relation to the cosmic forces. For this One is the ascending force of life in Nature and in man.”

from the I Ching, trans. by Richard Wilhelm

M: I feel like I’m saying the surface of it... I guess what the bones mean is not so essential...

S: Maybe the bones aren’t it anyway...

M: What the bones mean is not as essential as kind of allowing... I think I’m trying to explain what the bones mean and I don’t know what the bones mean.

S: How ‘bout the liver?

M: Even the liver, I don’t know what the liver means.

S: What’s the feeling, though?

M: The real feeling is that they are totally mysterious to me.

C: Yeah.

M: The truth of it is that they came from such a deep level... like that pit dream, like the earth opening up... they came from such a deep level...

C: That you have to talk about them with reverence.

M: Yeah. It’s like I looked down into me, and out came these things, like out of a black pit.

Foreword

Everyone who has encountered Marilyn Banner's work whether her art, her writing, or her presentations is stunned and made sweaty by its reality and earnestness.

This thesis is one of the few documents I know of which demonstrates and catalogues the deep transformational power of art. In it we can see the enormous pressure such a genuine effort places upon the artist, the immediate circle surrounding the artist, and even further its implied displacement of society. This work points to the universal self-validation which is the necessary creative nature counter to the perversion of destructive war.

This document represents a small part of the remarkable effort of Marilyn Banner to seek strong and direct actuality for her work as an artist and teacher. Further, it is an all too rare example of an authentic educative effort based on faith, instinct, will, and persistence. It gives renewed assurance in the meaning and validity of teaching.

Finally, her work establishes a framework, guide, and example for the artist/educator who seeks to nurture the development of children and adults through artistic and aesthetic activity, search and research.

Lowry Burgess
Cambridge, 1982

Introduction-Abstract

This thesis documents two years of my creative process. During this period I set about to answer some questions I had about my past art work--questions about the origins of the forms arising in my paintings, and about my inclinations toward various materials and their uses. With the help of my advisor, Lowry Burgess, I was able to delve into some of the literature on the unconscious, and later into levels of my own psyche. Following the readings, I developed a large tree image which I used thereafter as a symbolic structure to help me map out the levels and territories of my psyche, extending upward into images of purity, clarity, the spiritual realms, and downward into more awesome images and feelings of darkness, death, torture. I used conscious techniques such as careful color mixing and more unconscious techniques of attempting to capture my dreams, memories, fantasies, and persistent inner images in various media. I began to use entirely new media: real meat instead of painting or drawing it, photographs of immovable objects and unrepeatable happenings instead of the more traditional drawing methods I had been taught. I found ways of looking outward and listening inward which deepened and broadened my creative base, and tapped strong creative energies.

At the end of my "mapping" I had a show of my work at Mass. College of Art. I had not discovered the answers to my questions. I had found that the sources I had been asking about were far greater than I had suspected, and I let the new forces and images surface in that show.

This thesis is a detailed documentation of the two years I spent focused on my questions. The form best suited to my needs seemed to be a three column one in which I could describe the Journey, quote from a journal I kept as part of the study, and share some of the meaningful material I found in the literature.

This thesis includes much material of relevance to the fields of art, education, and art education. It can be used by artists and educators to help make the artmaking process one that demands the continual growth and self-awareness of the artist by drawing more and more on personal and meaningful content.

Fifty reproductions are included with the text, as well as a substantial appendix. A short bibliography of some useful guides to the area of the unconscious follows it.

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The Tip-Off: Diana's Class

M: I had to take a research class as part of my courses, and we had to design a research project, which was supposedly going to lead to what we did our thesis on, so we had to learn research methods, so you know what I studied? Three-year olds and how they drew a person, in response to me drawing a person.

S: Really?

M: I went to people's houses, and I had kids draw a person, then I drew a person, then I asked them to draw a person again; I wanted to see what they would do that was like me...

S: Oh, that's a good idea...

M: It was a good idea, and it was neat, and I did the research thing and it felt like a brain game for me to do it. At the end of the course the teacher said, "Now for your directed study, think about what you really want to know." Then I dreamt about her, and I went and said, "I dreamt about you, you have to see me!"

S: Who is that?

M. She's smart enough, she runs the whole art education program at Mass Art... same person who did the research class... so she saw me. And I said, "Look, I finished your course and I understand what I really want to know, and what I really want to know is this very hazy mushy area... about my unconscious, and I guess I really think I ought to take an independent study

I was pretty open about my direction at this time. When I began the program in art ed. specialization I had just come out of 5 years teaching kids. I was vaguely interested in bring art "down to earth," off the walls and into daily meaning and use... I was thinking about teenagers making and wearing their art, art as clothing and adornment...

I had already taken a history of art education class and had unearthed an old progressive artist/teacher from the 1920's with whom I felt some affinity: Florence Cane (see bibliography). I used the courses to help me define myself and my goals at that point in time - to help one get back, so to speak, to the real thing for my own self as a person who had a broad, undefined connection to art.

I also had a strong need to connect to who I was beneath my roles of mother, wife, and even art teacher. I was using the entire program at Mass Art to aid me in this search.

Florence Cane helped her students to draw on their inner resources by listening inward in many different ways. She encouraged reflection, letting out of emotionally charged experience, movement to aid the flow of energy, and chanting to aid centering.

'cause I have three credits I could use, but I don't know how to do that. She said, "The person that you want to see is Lowry Burgess, and you'll have to take his verbalizing course first this summer. So I gripped like crazy because I had to take a course that summer... but that allowed me to go see this man who knew me from nothing, in the fall, I mean he wasn't givin' out anything for nothin', he wasn't... he didn't say, "Ah, here's this wonderful student." He was very reticent, gave me the book list... I just happened to be industrious, I mean, I meant it. It's like I really did want to know something, and I went after it!

What happened after I completed the research paper and presentation was this: I went home and reflected, letting my mind calm down. Shortly, memories started piling in upon me: one was a memory of a footnote in a book I had year years ago (1964!) by Gyorgy Kepes - what I remembered was the point he made that if an artist really drew/painted from deep in his unconscious, the results would often resemble pictures taken from microscopic viewpoints of human organs, tissues, patterns of blood vessels and nerves... things like that. And I felt, "Ah hah!" That's the kind of stuff that really attracts me!" I went to sleep wondering how to connect that interest with a thesis project, and I dreamt that I met with Diana (Korzenik) to talk about it.

I didn't really want to know about art education in any technical or superficial sense. I wanted to know who I was as an artist and as an art educator. What/who were my spiritual ancestors? Where were my sources in distant times and places? Who shared my sense of awe and reverence for the natural world?

The Tip of the Iceberg

M: When I asked Lowry about my independent study I said I wanted to do it on "art and the unconscious.

(laughter)

S: That's what you did, though.

M: Well he told me to go home and think up a clear concise question - "art and the unconscious" was much too vague.

S: And vast...

M: Well actually what I had in mind were some little teeny questions about... why I would make round forms in my paintings... whether it was because I had round breasts, you know..

S: You mean, because you're a woman?

M: Exactly! For years I had felt that my work came from my body, my feminine body, and I would mention that to other women, women artists, and they acted really dense... most of them hadn't even thought about it.

C: A lot of women work from their heads...

M Well, I had this nagging sense of truth about it, for me at least. And also I wanted to know why I was pulled to many materials, why I didn't want to master painting, why I couldn't just be a painter and leave all these other questions out of it. And why I did hippopotamus images, and why I like lace... and whether things were coming

Where do my forms come from? What do all those flower centers mean - those full vessel-like shapes, those rising phallic stamens? Is it because I'm a female that these forms in my paintings feel like they come from my body? What is the source of the "sexuality" in these works? Me? The earth? Something in between?

Joseph Joubert (quoted by Bachelard in Poetics of Space) writes:

"It would be interesting to find out if the forms that birds give their nests, without ever having seen a nest, have not some analogy with their own inner constitutions."

See photos for examples of hippo images, a flower center painting from 1971... Jung's Four Archetypes has an enormous list of things he relates to the "Mother Archetype": fertility, fruitfulness - the cornucopia, garden, ploughed field... a rock, a cave, a tree, a deep well, a spring, vessels or vessel shaped flowers(!)... hollow objects like ovens, the uterus and similar shapes. And on the dark side, the witch, dragon, grave, deep water, death and nightmares. These latter ones gained meaning to me as I pursued this study. See Jung's books, especially Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, for description and elaboration of the concept of the archetype.

from different parts of me, different levels of my psyche, you know. I just had wondered off and on... I had been doing this stuff for so many years...

S: Well, were you able to make it into one question? What did he say to all this?

M: He joked and said something about maybe the forms in women's paintings veer to the lower right or lower left. I didn't know if he was being sarcastic or what! I felt a little funny, but I wasn't about to give up my questions, especially that one. I ended up listing about three questions, formally I mean, and Lowry gave me this huge book list...

Why do I respond so strongly to many different materials? Does it mean I'm a dilettante? Clay is so satisfying to press with my fingers, to push lace into, to squeeze. It is magnetic.

Sterling silver - what is it that pulls me there? The resistance I feel when sawing it or hammering it? The strange gleam of silver that I feel, it seems, somewhere in my body, between my ears?

What is my affinity to lace about? I see it in collages I made 10 years ago, in clay vases from 4 years ago, in etchings from even longer ago - 1965! What is the meaning of it? Why do I choose it?

What are these hippopotamus - like animals all about? I see one from 5 years ago, from 4, from 2 years ago. Is there a meaning to this particular image for me? Do I just feel like a hippo sometimes - large, slowly moving? Do I repeat these "primitive" forms because I'm not sophisticated?

I almost hear a reverberating sound when I hold one of them. Where does that come from?

If I go back to teaching art, what is it that I want to teach? What is real for me about art that I can feel honest about sharing?

"Meditation"

"And Elijah when Jezebel threatened his life came thither unto a cave, and lodged there, and behold the word of the Lord came to him, and said unto him, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' And he said, 'I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away.' And he said, 'Go forth and stand upon the mount of the Lord.' And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains... but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire and after the fire a still small voice."

The Old Testament, I: Kings, 19" quoted by Seonaid Robertson in Rosegarden and Labyrinth

For the record, I stated: What I wanted to find out was, "Where do my images come from? Why do various series of drawings/ paintings/ ceramics seem to come from different places inside me? Are there levels of my psyche that are being tapped by different materials or ideas?"

Swimming in the Morass

M: The book list had on it Freud... and a bunch of people who wrote on the unconscious. And that's when I got a really funny feeling also. I was asking such small questions and the feeling of the reading was that the unconscious was vast. And I was asking why I made round forms in my paintings!

You know (to Carl); you read Seonaid Robertson a bit.

...She just knew that some art work that kids did had a sense of.. a haunting.. sense of truth about it. She couldn't quite put her finger on it, so she devised a whole study to find out more about it.

C: It didn't have to do with excellence either.

M: No, it had to do with some very deep stuff coming up.

S: That's really what your whole study is about isn't it? That stuff coming up but did the things you read really do anything? I mean were they really shaking you up ...weren't you already aware of those things she was writing about?

M: I was and wasn't, you know. I really had gotten out of touch with myself... my deeper self I mean. I mean there are levels and levels, but these guys were writing about earthquake-type stuff. One that I read kept talking about oceanic

Seonaid's description:

"As these paintings passed before my eyes almost as blobs of colour and shapes, some recurring rhythm, some special kind of vision seemed to emerge from the series. I cannot at this point describe what it was, only hint at a vague feeling that the same sort of thing was happening again and again...it was rather like a mood which emerges from the hidden structure of music."

Seonaid Robertson in Rosegarden and Labyrinth

And her quotation from W.H. Auden, used in talking about themes that tap those deeper levels:

"The sea, or the great waters, are the symbol for the primordial undifferentiated flux, the substance which became created nature only by having form imposed upon or wedded to it.

"Its first most obvious characteristic is its perpetual motion, the violence of wave as tempest; its power may be destructive, but unlike that of the desert, it is positive. Its second is the teeming life that lies hidden below the surface which, however dreadful, is greater than the visible."

Robertson, Rosegarden and Labyrinth, p. 54

See appendix for a list of these books.

Writers like Freud and Kubie pointed back to early childhood, to unresolved conflicts, as the source for some of art's mystery. Kubie might say that the hippo image was a body image I was stuck with. See reproduction of one of my hippo-like creatures.

I had a dream that semester...

The gallery at Mass Art had one wall built of huge cinder blocks. Lowry was halfway up the wall, scaling it somehow. He was moving some of those blocks around, sideways and at angles...not so as to make the wall crash. Just moving a few blocks.

The next day I understood ...Lowry, through those books, was moving some of my internal blocks around. Disturbing the status quo in there...aiding the flow.

levels and honest to God I'd get seasick. Nauseous not in a bad way exactly. But I'd have to put the book down for days.

C: What about Bachelard? He wasn't threatening in that way.

M: Bachelard... this wonderful person. You would love this book Sarah... The Poetics of Space. Just beautiful... very warm and homey. You're right, Car. But it still was talking to those parts of me that... that you just don't think about. I mean he was writing about your soul, and what memories of real places and things feel resonant... resonant way inside. Like the Tiffany lamp at my grandmother's house. The good memories mostly... he wasn't into terror. (laugh) I mean, sometimes I felt jealous, like he'd had this wonderful childhood, full of good memories of places in his house...

I have to mention Eliade, and his book Patterns in Comparative Religion.

His respect for the sense of the sacred - the sacred place, the sacred tree - the varieties of ways that this sense/awareness is expressed through time and cultures - was so resonant and comforting to me! I had always had that sense... the year before this one I had come upon a place in Habitat (a nature-wildlife setting in Belmont, Massachusetts) which I called "a sacred grove" - a meadow's edge lined with large dark white pine trees. I was haunted by their mystery and quiet gentle "speech."

Bachelard:

"The voice we all hear when we listen as far back as memory reaches, on the very limits of memory, beyond memory perhaps, in the field of the immemorial. All we communicate to others is an orientation towards what is secret without ever being able to tell the secret objectively."

Bachelard, Poetics of Space

"The sacred is always dangerous to anyone who comes into contact with it unprepared, without having gone through the 'gestures of approach' that every religious act demands. 'Come not nigh higher' said the Lord to Moses, 'put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'"

Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion

The point I want to make it that I steeped myself in writers that were talking about something I felt I had lost and wanted to regain, some connection with my inner voices, some way to return to something... but I wasn't sure what it was or where or how to reach it. The writings touched something in me, or nudged it. I followed, a bit uncomfortable and often dizzy. By the end of that semester my head was spinning, full to the brim with weighty phrases and words like "lapis," "magic crystal," "womb of the earth," "rebirth from the bones," "temenos" (a sacred place), world tree, intimate immensity, self creating god... The only way I could deal with all these "heavies" was to list them and then give them some order on a small schema of a tree stretching downward and upward, from the Dark to the Light.

See the reproduction section for copies of the first and second schematic drawings in which I tried to order the concepts.

Unraveling the Web

M: And after I finished those readings, and even more - Shamanism, Bali, incredible stuff that I could hardly begin to fathom, I drew a little drawing. Just something to try to put all the concepts in order. And I brought it in to Lowry, with other written stuff about the readings... and he said, "What is in those areas? What is in that sky?" I was blank. I didn't know what he was talking about! I remember wondering to myself, "Does he mean angels? Birds?"

C: You thought you had put everything in it already...

M: Well, I had all the concepts and the big ideas - rainbows, deer antlers of the sacred deer, womb of the earth, the rose in the center... I even had processes written along the side - transformation... I don't remember it all.

S: It sounds very abstract...

M: Well, it was, I guess. 'Cause Lowry really was wanting me to expand it in a personal way. He told me to go home and list my early memories, to list the things I had loved to touch and make things with when I was 3 years old. And to list what I liked to sequester, to steal... and places I liked to hide, and places I hated to be. And the things I couldn't stand... So I went home, and I just did it... and once I listed the first two or three, they just poured out.

My "early memories" list.

What I liked to build with, touch, smell...

Doilies.

The glass swan.

The fur inside the iris petal.

The inside of iris leaves.

Fur, mink, cashmere, mohair.

The satin shiny stuff inside fur coats. Not satin alone. Satin with velvety stuff. Velvet. Black velvet.

Plush velvet.

Lying in grass. Smell of cut grass. The feel of grass on my palms, fingers, face. Cherry tree bark, the way it feels.

The shine.

The smell of lilacs.

The feel of magnolia petals. Soft, smooth.

Tinsel.

Glitter, especially silver.

My mother's rabbit's foot.

Petting my canary.

Touching the baby chicken.

Ribbons, especially the silky kind. Not the slick, harsh.

Smell of sweet gum leaves.

Clouds.

All the concepts and processes came out of the readings - my attempts to order the chaotic profusion in my head.

S: How could you do that? I'm not sure I could remember back...

C: I couldn't. Not that many. Lots of people have blocks against those parts of childhood...

M: Well, I had been in therapy, and gone back... and I guess I just wasn't afraid of going there. I had felt all the pain already, so I could go back and peek around, you know... and Lowry said, list all these things, and then "Hang them on your tree." That was most incredible part. First the list which was full of things like tinsel, and mercury that the dentist used to put in my hand, and ribbons, and standing under a lilac tree; and I had this one memory of the little yellow ball from the Jello pudding stuff that you made lemon pie with... my mom used to let me put that little ball in the pot of water and stir it on the stove until, bam, it turned to lemon pie stuff. Magic! Memories like that, you know.. And awful stuff...our basement our garage which was falling down, the cockroaches in the bathroom..

S: How could you do this and not get scared? Does Lowry give this kind of assignment to other people?

M: I'm sure he does. He thinks that most of our selves, our aesthetic selves, are pretty much developed by the time we're three or four. So going back there.. I guess it's like going back to your roots in a way. Very powerful.

Cotton balls.

Shiny paper gummed stars.
Silver. Also blue.

Down comforter, down pillows.

Lace, but I don't remember where from.

Smelling fall leaves burning.

Lemon pie custard, the feel, taste, smell. The magic of it.

Velvety brocade wallpaper.

Green soft moss on the ground.

Those balls of mercury at the dentist.

Things I hated/feared:

Our ash pits.

Ashes in them.

Concrete of the alley.

Broken down dark garages.

Sharp splintery wood.

Gravel.

Car metal.

Cold white harsh bathroom fixtures.

Refrigerator and stove metal.

The old threadbare rug. No softness.

The metal of my bed headboard.

The feel of the back porch bars.

The wire fence in the yard.

Basement, especially the lockers

Creaky doors. Dark jail cells.

Fear. Cockroaches. Fear.

Broken glass - fear of cutting.

Dark closets. Fear of being locked inside.

Some of my memories were probably from age 5 or 6 or 7. The "baby chicken I liked to touch" was at a neighbor's house on the back metal steps (fire escape). I accidentally stepped down on that very chick and made its guts come out. It died - an awful, painful, nauseating memory to me. I felt guilty and horrified. Making the list began to bring up these sorts of memory/feelings/images.

C: I remember how I loved the bark of sycamore trees when it rained... all the colors, the shapes... I was very young..and I remember the feeling in my body when I sat under the piano while Thelma played...

M: You see! And you even had heard music before that, when you were in the womb. I'm sure you heard a lot! And when you let out one memory, the others kind of come into focus, and they keep coming..

S: And what did you do with all this, with all your memories?

M: I hung them on the tree, I guess. They kind of exploded into an enormous tree..

My mother cleaning and skinning a chicken. Yuk. Mice frightened me.

Smell of pickles.

Smell of beer.

The look of gefilte fish.

Where I felt good...

On front step in the spring - near the irises and flowering bushes.

On the back porch watching clouds on summer nights. On my father's lap.

Near the telephone.

Under the lilac tree, smelling lilacs. Under the Tiffany lamp at grandma's.

What I hid, sequestered, coveted, stole...

I stole candy bars - not preschool but later.

I coveted large chocolate bars. My parent about hid them from me.

Joni's delicate ankle bracelet with hearts - coveted.

I loved a banjo or ukelele. I liked the plucker to it - like mother of pearl.

Foods - I liked

chocolate

jelly beans

lemon pie custard

matzo balls

kreplach

Jelly candies at Passover.

"If we have retained an element of dream In our memories, If we have gone beyond merely assembling exact recollections, bit by bit the house that was lost in the mists of time will appear from out the shadow. We do nothing to recognize it; with intimacy it recovers its entity, in the mellowness and imprecision of the inner life. It is as though something fluid had collected our memories and we ourselves were dissolved in this fluid of the past.

"Rilke, who experienced this intimacy of the fusion of being with the lost house: 'I never saw this strange dwelling again. Indeed, as I see it now, the way it appeared to my child's eye, it is not a building, but is quite dissolved and distributed inside me: here one room, there another, and here a bit of corridor which, however, does not connect with the two rooms, but is conserved in me in fragmentary form. Thus the whole thing is scattered about inside me, the rooms, the stairs that descended with such ceremonious slowness, others, narrow cages that mounted in a spiral movement, in the darkness of which we advanced like the blood in our veins.'"

Bachelard, Poetics of Space, P. 57

Making it Mine

M: I have to show you these drawings. They were really an incredible experience.

S: You've talked about them before. Didn't you use your kitchen or something?

M: Yeah... I had no real space for art work then, and Lowry was telling me to blow up the schema to enormous size, to fit in my memories I guess. I told him I had no room and he said, "Use your ceiling!"

(laughter)

M: That's typical of him. Where I see a wall he sees a way past, or just no wall! Anyway, I took home some used brown Kraft paper from the "dugout" at Mass Art, and started right away. I did the whole slew of these on this very table, taping it together as I went along. Here's where I started, with the base of the tree, and this mossy furry stuff around the trunk of it. I just knew that the fur was moss...

S: Marilyn, it's so soft looking there, and so warm over here. What's this light area, with rays...

M: That's what Phyllis said too about this part. That it has a lot of warmth. That's the Tiffany lamp that I used to sit under at my mother's mother's house when I was little. It had this wonderful glow, and some kind

I hadn't realized when I blew up the schema that I was still using the tree as a central focus. The tree in my first schema was supposed to be the "world tree" that I had read about in Eliade's book, Patterns in Comparative Religion. (See the appendix for quotes on the symbolism of the "centre"). I hadn't understood it then. As I drew, it became a kind of center of my self, an image upon which my dreams, memories, imagination, and intuitions could begin to find a space to exist in form.

As I remember, in the next drawing session I moved downward to the roots just below the earth. My specific memories of materials and an open mind seemed to create the forms and the textures, here as in the rest of these drawings. Gravel and rock chunks crowded between large roots. My old wooden garage pushed against a root. The ashpit and other backyard and alley materials also seemed to force themselves against the tree roots and earth. I felt angry, and the marks with which I drew felt like darts and slashes against the paper.

Something about the size of these drawings - each piece of paper I used was at least three feet wide and three feet long. I extended images by Scotch taping new sheets on. The freedom to use large gestures, especially in the cloud-sun area, seemed to open up something in me - the images seemed part of the dancing sweeping gesture that my arm could make. Florence Cane discusses this (large gesture) connection in The Artist in Each of Us.

You can see in the reproductions that some marks come through into my drawings from the reverse side of the paper. I began these on reject paper, already used for kids' drawings. That (used) aspect was also freeing to me. I wasn't after "fine art" on "fine artist's paper."

of fringe hanging down. I must have sat under it a lot all alone. I don't remember the rest of her house at all. Just that spot.

C: Look at those blocks (to S). Did you play with those when you were little?

S: I loved those. And the kids now of course play with the same kind. My memories get all mixed up with the things we have at school. Like marbles. I used to save certain cat's eye marbles.

C: I have that blue marble on my dresser right now.

M: Glass is on here too, but up more. I Just did this whole thing by feel. Here are the feathers of our canary (pointing to the bark of the tree). They were so silky. And I was so mad at my parents the night it died. It was shivering and we had to go out, and when we came back it was dead on its back. It was awful...

S: Sounds like your memories are really clear. Did they get even more clear from doing this, or the other way around? Do you know what I mean?

M: Kind of. In feeling they got more clear. That was the hard part, I guess. Like when I did this part (pointing to the garage, car, etc.). I was furious. It was like I was back there and vulnerable, and I started thinking about our back yard and around our apartment, the alley and glass, and this wire fence. I just felt so angry, and I let myself draw with these angry marks, I let the feelings come out.

A small bathtub and toilet, bug and basement drain, made their way in - hinted at but shyly. These areas felt dark and a bit frightening. Here I left the "dark" side and returned to the tree just before its branching out.

Bachelard: "I am moreover convinced that the human psyche contains nothing that is insignificant." from Poetics of Space

House as metaphor for a person, like the world tree.

Bachelard (in Poetics of Space):

"Finally, the house stretches from earth to sky, It possesses the verticality of the tower rising from the most earthly, watery depths, to the abode of a soul that lives in heaven, Such a house... illustrates the verticality of the human being."

This quotation describes my whole tree expanse... from bones and crocodiles and slime and rock to clouds, glass, snowflakes, air.

And actually up here I had been crying. I mean this part (the lamp) was one of my only comforting memories I think I felt very, like my surroundings, Just the materials around me, were hostile to my spirit, All that wire and metal, gravel, alleys, fences... just not nurturing to my spirit at all, to my sensitive little girl spirit, you know... And Bachelard kept talking about wonderful memories Or childhood..

S: Wasn't this feeling at all scary to you? I mean..

M: Not then. I got off of it, you know. Each day I would say, now what next! Some time I'd wake up and say, A cloud! that's it! I mean the next part of the drawing would sort of appear in my mind. And the cloud! Right off my list of memories, those cumulus clouds. This cloud is really special to me because of the glitter. In fact, it felt like this part kind of opened up the whole rest of the tree. Here, see... that Kate Smith song about "Look for the Silver Lining." I used to listen to that every day, right before Howdy Doody.

(laughter)

C: We didn't even have a T.V. then.

S: And that's why you put this glitter here? From that song?

Lacing the tree trunk and branches with ribbons, letting them create a nest, I moved upwards. The tree branched out broadly into or up to the sky, leafless, spiraling, and open, I waited. A cumulus cloud came to mind' the kind I had gazed at as a child. I sang to myself, "Look for the Silver Lining" as I heard Kate Smith do when we first got a T.V. (age 5?). I smiled a secret smile, found some silver glitter, and "drew" the bottom of the cloud with glue and glitter. Words like "impure" and "kid stuff" came into my thoughts. The words of past art teachers, always there to Judge! Despite the inner Judgements, I felt amazingly light and free. Letting myself use glitter seemed to open me up to further imagery in the sky.

A real cumulus cloud sailed by, helping me see what delicate edges the breeze gave to it. Again, I waited for what would come next.

M: And also my memory of tinsel and mercury. but letting myself use glitter. I can't describe it. It was like being heretical, you know. Glitter! You'd never use glitter in an art school. God forbid! It's for little kids! And I Just did It. I took the leap... and somehow it freed up this upper part - the sun and the swan and this prism... my whole head just opened up and out came these... levels,

"All these sacred constructions represent the whole universe in symbol: their various floors or terraces are identified with the 'heavens' or levels of the cosmos... Every consecrated place, in fact, is a 'centre'... where there exists the possibility of breaking through from the level of earth to the level of heaven."

Eliade,

Patterns of Comparative

Religion p. 373

Going Underground

M: After I did all the tree drawings, after I opened up my psyche 6° in B upward, and I finished my independent study, my advisor said, "Now, your independent study is done. Now, you should try to find out what is below the tree, and you should try to draw some recurrent childhood nightmares and fears. But he wasn't going to see me anymore, so that was just like, on my own, I could try that. So I, being very industrious, as I am (laugh), I went home and right away tried to figure out what went below the tree. And I couldn't. But I remember I had a dream and I woke up and I said, "I know, it's kind of like Bosch stuff!"

S: Oh, yeah..

M: I had a feeling that there was, like, sexual and you know, mean, bad stuff, below the tree. And then I just... enabled myself to draw below the tree and... ended up with a big alligator..

S: How did you get from the dream to the alligator? I mean, Bosch doesn't paint alligators..

M: Haven't you ever dreamed that you solved some problem, or did something you had been trying to do but just couldn't do it in real life? Then you dream it and just... you just wake up and do it!

S: Yeah, I see. The fear is gone. Or you forgot it, something like that.

Jung, p. 336: Psychology and Alchemy

"The dread and resistance which every natural human being experiences when it comes to delving too deeply into himself is, at bottom, the fear of the journey to Hades. If it were only resistance that he felt, it would not be so bad. In actual fact, however, the psychic substratum, that dark realm or the unknown, exercises a fascinating attraction that threatens to become more overpowering the further he penetrates into it."

One of the first underground images to arise in the drawing was a huge snail shell attached to the main root. From Bachelard's chapter on shells in Poetics of Space: he quotes Jurgis Ballrusartis:

"As late as the Carolingian epoch, burial grounds often contained snail shells - an allegory or a grave in which man will awaken."

He writes or "a coffin that contained nearly three hundred snail shells placed about the skeleton from feet to waistline (..) Such a contact with a belief places us at the origin of all beliefs. "

"The assumption that the human psyche possesses layers that lie below consciousness is not likely to arouse serious opposition. But that there could just as well be layers lying above consciousness seems to be a surmise which borders on a crimen laesae majestatis humanae. In my experience the conscious mind can claim only a relatively central position and must accept the fact that the unconscious psyche transcends and as it were surrounds it on all sides. Unconscious contents connect it backwards with physiological states on the one hand and archetypal data on the other. But it is extended forwards by intuitions which are determined partly by archetypes and partly by subliminal perceptions depending on the relativity of time and space in the unconscious."

C.G. Jung,

Psychology and Alchemy

p. 137

I;7 C.

M: I guess so. I didn't really draw orgies and heavy sexual stuff I guess. Just a big root doing down and I sort of let things grow around it. Like the going upward but, I think, with less of the memory list. Maybe the gefilte fish showed up - as a big turd! That's what it looked like to me when I was little, I just, couldn't stand the jar near me' (laughter)

C: Like pea soup - it always looked like vomit!

S: Or pickles and penises...

M: I hated pickles. I think they're on my hate list, too... Anyway, it wasn't so scary once I started. I realized, at least for me I guess, that there was a skeleton down there. And a huge cracked egg with a dead, actually it looks paralyzed... a paralyzed bird.

S: Do you have these drawings here too?

M: I forgot. I do..(unrolling large drawings, addinB pieces)

S: Boy, you really got into that alligator, huh?

M: The teeth on him were incredible. I loved drawing his teeth. Even describing it... honestly... I get this desire to grit my teeth and make this growly cackly sound.,and make my hands into claws. My monster self! (laughter)

S: What did Lowry say to this part?

During the spring of 1980 I enrolled in a Feminist Performance Workshop at Mass Art taught by Ellen Rothenberg. I was still interested in the question of where my forms come from, and what my inclinations and products had to do with my being female. At the same time I was expanding my tree downwards to the roots, though my independent study had technically ended. Ellen's focus in the class was in making the inner, outer, in helping us to allow our inner selves, our private selves, out in the medium of performance art. We shared verbal autobiographies (whispering, shouting...); we role-played parts of ourselves we wanted to exorcise; we acted out parts of our dreams... I had never before experienced any classwork to be so threatening, direct, or in the end, satisfying.

From my Journal during Ellen's class, as I wondered about how to do "performance":

"I dream of a swimming pool. People are racing, both ways at once. It

swim to feel good, I think. I

-race across, skimming over the water like a flying fish. I jump out, stand proud. Is that mastery? I never did like that word performance."

"Intimacy with myself is hard to share."

"Hot pink. I love hot pink.

Takes me back to those teenage days."

I loved drawing the skeleton, remembering (from an old art school requirement) how the bones curved and articulated... those wonderful ball'n'socket Joints!

M: Nothing. He never even saw it... not then anyway. My independent study was over and I was taking a fantastic class called Feminist Performance Workshop. See this huge breast and baby in the womb?

S: Wow.

C: Really motherly and huh? Makes you want to curl right up like that baby...

M: Well somehow I was so into this on a... a kind of internal level... it just kept going. I kept going downward and here were these earthy feminine images under my tree and I used these, the drawings and their sense of... the meanings of the breast and baby became the meanings of my performances in that class. It was just incredible!

"I glance at a book of research on families... a chapter on family experience of firstborn children. After all, who am I now? I read, 'The relentless giving of self that follows the birth is a reality that relatively few had planned for.'"

When I read that I realized why I didn't want to "perform" for anyone. I was always giving, nurturin6... being a wife, bein6 a mother. And I wrote:

"How to get nourishment for all of me. Feeding and LETTING IT OUT. Streamers. Streamers from my hands. Extensions. Touching the world, letting out what? Blood? Energy? Brains.

"Feeding myself. Nourishment... Nourish nurture nurse. Breasts, a big drawing of a breast on the wall. Spouting milk."

The underground imagery of breast and baby in a womb (flesh as part of the feeling of earth... mother earth, her offspring...) showed up in my performance work:

When the final performance was assigned, I felt still attuned to my need for nourishment. How I was supposed to nourish others, how I struggled to nourish myself, and how I sensed that in some way I was nourished by a source higher than myself. The form this source took in my performance was a very large drawing of a breast. The breast became a sort of shrine - from its

Jung, Psychology and Alchemy:

"There is an unmistakable hint here that the work and its goal depend largely on mental condition."

"But the source is underground and therefore the way leads underneath: only down below can we find the fiery source of life. These depths constitute the natural history of man, his causal link with the world of instinct. Unless this link be rediscovered no lapis and no self can come into bein6.

C.G. Jung: Psychology and Alchemy, p. 120

nipple came a cord which I attached to my navel - this connection gave me some "food" with which I then, in the performance, began to draw - a baby in a womb. Incense, candles, scarves on the wall, special racks to hold the drawing paper, and a quote from the I Ching. "Nature nourishes all beings," helped give my performance, for me, the feelings of a sacred ritual. It was again a simple sharing, through my sensibility, of who and where I was at the time.

See Lucy Lippard's book, From the Center, for description of feminist performance works during the last decade.

I

A Room of One's Own

M: The women in that group were so... supportive and appreciative of what I had to give. I felt all warmed up by it and decided to find a real studio. I had never had a real "artist's" studio... I'd been working in my basement and at Mass Art, but neither place felt Just right. This was the real thing - and huge!

S: That's a pretty big step, isn't it?

C: It was a big step. She had all kinds of dreams about it... being afraid to do it, of losing something.

M: Come on! I'm always having dreams of losing something. Every time I make a change I think I'm gonna die, or lose everything.,

C: But you did lose something! You had to start taking yourself, or your art, more seriously.

M: I did the caves there. That was the real... that was what I really could do there, you know... I got this enormous cardboard box. I had to call furniture places to get it... and I made it into a dark cave, I loved it. A black cave. I had had this cave dream and I wanted a cave I could go into, really go into. I tried painting a cave but it didn't work. It looked just like "The Source," that Courbet painting. I mean that was the feeling. He must have felt something that I did... Oh yeah, and my clay cave! Jesus, I'd forgotten. That was the first one, I think. I went to Project to build it. I had such a strong urge...

My dream, as written into my dream book at night, June 1980.

"Me in line to go into a tunnel or mine. Men waiting. Water. Hills of rock salt or rocks in front of the opening. Not sure If I'm to be covered (by rocks) or move around them. I call up to the boss but no boss. No one knows (what I'm to do) so I wait. They all stop for a break, no one knows what they're doing. At break some men play music, black men. I have a towel around me, dance a bit but not so as to arouse them. I see rocks on a table, as from the ocean I collect some or look at them."

I worked with this dream only a short time in my mind before I felt a powerful need to give the mine or cave some form. Clearly it was "mine," my own, and it was a dark cave with something in it worth mining. There was no boss among the men - they were all aimless, I was, in essence, the person in charge of telling me what this scene was all about. The men (my past teachers? the male art world?) couldn't really help; they could only

lunch and watch me dance.

Seonaid Robertson writes about caves:

"Caves are places to which sages, heroes and saints retire for meditation or renewal - retire into themselves perhaps, to bring forth a new capacity for thought or deeds. Caves are often the birthplace of streams which well up as inexplicably from the depths as creative thought itself."

Seonaid Robertson Rosegarden and Labyrinth PP. 55-6

Here are two Journal quotes from that summer:

July 23, 1980

"Haunting memories of dark holes. The windows Or the shacks in South Jersey. Year round residents. Did people really live there? Black windows in Hew York City. Lonely, singular figures peer out, hang out the windows from the dark.

"Pearls of teeth in the smiles of black migrant workers."

S: Is that what you did at the studio. All caves?

M: No, I built large canvasses and tried to be a painter. I mean, I somehow thought that I had to be some kind of artist I could describe, and Lowry had suggested I try some paintings off the tree and...

C: That cloud in our living room is from there.

S: But that's beautiful! Very free and open.

M: Some worked I guess. But I tried to paint the swan and it was so visceral. I got really confused about what I was doing. I tried the sky and stars but I couldn't get the right blue... it didn't feel right either.

C: What about the bug with the evil grin? And you did some little things... dreams I think. You were doing those way back then!

M: Yeah! The bug. I had already known that the cockroach part of my tree was really scary. The memory was so strong... when I was little there were cockroaches all over our house. Lowry had suggested months before that I draw a recurrent fear or nightmare, but I wouldn't do it, I was afraid Or the fear! And I knew I'd have to draw that cockroach. I kept putting it off and putting it off. Like going to the doctor or something...

C: Finally she drew this big bug at the Bio Labs...

The cave as a complete image was strong in my mind. I decided to try it in clay first - closest to rock, cave, etc. as a material for me. I rented some space at Project Art Center and constructed my cave - a dark hollow, organically heart shaped from without, the inside open to view. I squeezed coils of clay with which I built stalagmites and stalagmites. They looked more like dancers or bones spiralling; I let them be. Two small rock pillars lined up at the entrance.

I built another of a cardboard box lined inside and out with black cloth. Stalagmites and stalagmites were of tin foil. My feeling was that

it needed jewels on the ceiling inside, and a pool of water in the center.

My fantasies for it from my Journal, June 1900:

"A large environment lined inside with blackboards, People may enter, meditate at the center, reflecting pool, lean against a stalagmite or stalactite pillar. Strength of them... Plato's cave, Sybil's cave. Eleusinian mysteries... Seonaid Robertson's visit to a coal mine. The track leads in. Ends. I wander. You wander. Echoes. No outer light. Comfort, a womb. Water in there. Rock. Serious structures outside... "

It became a projection of a part of me - a quiet, dark internal part. I left the aesthetic questions aside. I left the darkness quiet unruffled...

(See the appendix to this chapter for more on my interest in dreams).

July 25, 1980

"Watched crows near the reservoir. They are symbols of death. Huge. Harsh beaks - intense darkness.

"The fly I battered to death. Dark holes appeal to me and frighten me. My 'cave' dream - dark opening to the mine. I always close closets at bedtime. And what do I fear will come out?

July 30

." and I painted a cave made of boulders. Very heavy. Enclosed. Dark. Ponderous. What is the dark all about? And light all about?

"Funny that bathroom drawing took me right to my fears. I've been afraid to expand them. Lowry has suggested big drawings of early recurrent nightmares. Fears I'm more aware of - cockroaches, tarantulas, dark closets, mosquito attacks, quicksand (from that movie)."

M: I used the board. I kept wanting a blackboard and there was this huge one in the hall and one night I just did it! I got so into it I started cackling and looking malicious, sort of imitating it, I made those feelers and hair on the legs and... very yukky, I loved it!

S: Sounds like drawing it took away the fear, or added something, some pleasure...

M: It added something. I didn't follow it up then, but that's all the stuff that came back. And I started a painting of it, where the cockroach has this shining eye and evil grin... and teeth! I love teeth.

My studio gave me room to expand, and room to face some of my difficulties. I found myself stuck with images - of an image of myself as a "painter," of images of completed paintings before they had been begun. I began several large paintings of parts of my tree - a huge cloud, a swan, a sun, a starry night sky, and even, with some trepidation, a painting of a cockroach. They all felt like beginnings - I didn't know where to take them or what to do with the difficulty, for instance, of capturing the qualities of my glass swan, light, clear, calm, in so gutsy a medium as oil paint was for me

Transformations

M: I finally let out more... you know, Claudine said a year ago that my spirit was light; she kept saying, "You have a light spirit." This was the person I took that one week course from, she didn't know me from a hole in the wall; she kept saying, "You have such a light spirit!" And in her course was the first place that we had to pick an idea and go after it, and I picked fear/darkness, 'cause I said, I have to integrate this into myself, 'cause I knew that I had a light spirit, and I felt that I was... one-sided. It was like I didn't have grounding... I don't know if that's gotten solved...

The week after I vacated my studio (the Arsenal Arts building was being torn down) I spent 6 full days in a class called Transformations - a class through Mass Art taught by Claudine Bing. I used the class (as I used everything after that time) to continue my Journey inward, to get more clarity about my sources and inclinations.

The first day of the course we chose a theme to work with. Having hesitated all summer, I took the leap and chose "dark/fear/personal shadow." We started with drawings of a chosen object... I chose an eggplant. We drew, letting the drawings transform themselves into something else. We thought about and created sculptures, further transformations.

From my Journal of that week:

"Egg plant transformation. My theme so far is dark/fear/personal shadow. Maybe into bugs, rats, teeth. The eggplant's darkness attracted me immediately... the shape is like a fat rat's body..."

To participate in this 6 day long intensive class in Dover, Massachusetts, I had to find child-care from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M. and sometimes 9 P.M. My husband was the only likely candidate. He spent the whole week with Gabe and I spent the first week since his birth (in June, 1977) full time on my 04n work. It was wonderful And frustrating because I couldn't get that kind of open time other days. Gabe was only three, and not yet in nursery school...

"Second drawing. I let the beak start it... I let my arm move more freely at the end of this drawing. The hair on the tail and across the back felt more like bullets attacking the paper. Satisfying to let out that kind of energy to make marks. I like the little horns like devil horns where does he come from) this evil bird? I want to find out the subtle things that my shadow side has. The energy, the feel for teeth, hair, beaks, horns... the feel for textural qualities. Memory of that Shaman beak rattle we saw at Bernheimers'.

"Maybe make something like that. Feathers. Wrapping with cloth, wood.

I used to fear the voodoo aspect but if it really is (Just!) my own dark side, this is the right time to look at it.

"Feeling of making a shrine to darkness. Like the cave I built but never completed. The mine from my dream. The shreeness is important somehow. Ritual, sense of worship.

Bernheimer's is an incredible store for collectors of primitive art and for people who like to touch things like masks, shells, drums of skins... I had written in my Journal July 24, after stopping in there:

"Harvard Square. In Bernheimer's feeling the 'primitive' art

"The bird, long beak, wrapped, feather.

"A Shamanic tool, for sure

"The three legged vessels. Open, with animal-like legs.

"The animals with open vessels on their backs.

"The Ceylonese Bodhisativa.

"Some things speak of a 'terrible' beyond.

"Or a very dark drum beat.

"The heart of darkness. n

See reproduction section for a picture of one of Bernheimer's "dark" objects.

"My process in the dark lady:

"In my mind was a smaller image of an animal with spikes - a crow or similar. The size of my armature made it... feel like a person... It was a 'she' right away. I wanted her in a dark environment that the viewer 'entered.' I like the black feeling, lack of eyes, nails I stuck in. I liked the sticking them in like the poking strokes on the drawn bird."

Most important for me at this time was that I had allowed myself to begin to look into my personal dark side. I remembered drawing the alligator at the base of my tree root - his teeth sharp, his claws like spikes. Something was there for me I could feel it in my body, my teeth something in the spikes and teeth, in the jabbing marks on the bird drawing and the pins and nails I poked through the dark lady's black cloth. Something about my aggression? My anger? I couldn't really give a word to this sensation that would describe it fully.

At the end of this class I printed with crow feathers and wild goose feathers and wrote I Ching quotes on the prints - so natural and perfect, since the I Ching 1B like a friend, and the lines, have both profound meaning and poetry. I had already used the I Ching in my final performance in Ellen Rothenberg's class... each person in the audience had received a "gift" of a Ching line cast particularly for her. See the appendix for more on the I Ching.

Beginning the Expansion

M: The strange thing was that when Lowry gave me the original assignment to work with the tensions, the tensions being... I had a prism at the very top of my tree, and the idea above the prism, like the golden section geometry, protective geometry I guess, and the bottom being dark chaos, literally, like matter in chaos, beneath images oven, To work with those tensions, which I didn't understand... and he said, "You'll probably do some things down here so it will seem to flip up there." I couldn't understand what he was talking about!

S: Was that what your thesis was supposed to be about? The ideas of high and low you mean?

M No, that was Just part of it. It was really incredible, because Lowry was teaching another class at Dover the week I took Claudine's class. I had been driving myself crazy trying to think up a thesis project that would build on what I had been into; most, probably all the other grad students were doing the regular kind of thing like a research project where you ask a clear question, use a certain population, get a clear answer, or you write a curriculum...

S: I know those... I know what you mean.

What Lowry actually said was, "I want you to take your tree and expand it further. Find out how far those roots and branches will go, and which ones are dead ends for you. And work especially with the tensions of the top and bottom direction." He hinted at the realms I'd been working in, pointing (on a small tree schema) to the Tiffany lamp-nest area as "the comfortables" and to the bug-garage-wire fence area as "the uglies." I was to use drawing as the medium for my probe of these areas, at least to begin with. Later, I would choose some materials for further expansion. I was to reread the books (Jung, etc.) again for personal material, to add new books (Plato, The Egyptian Book of the Dead...) and to take a class in glass as an aid to pushing the upward direction (my glass swan and prism). I was to keep a journal, including my dreams which could feed in at any point on the tree.

At the end of my study I would have a thesis show and a written thesis with lots of visual documentation of my work.

M: I had written pages in my journal about... my questions, my ideas on spirit, using art to connect all the parts of yourself up... and I still didn't know whether to ask Lowry to be my thesis advisor because of my feminist questions... I still couldn't tell where he was at with all that. People kept advising me to get a woman advisor

Anyway, I went up to him one day and said, "You're it!" and the next day he gave me this fantastic design for a thesis!

S: By then he was on your side

M: You said it. I was going to get to continue my own work, and EXPAND the tree. I can't say I realized that I was the tree... I mean it was me who was going to be expanded. But I felt great! Can you imagine doing a thesis project that is just your own thing? I felt like the cat that swallowed the mouse or something... and that very day he gave me the first 'assignment' - I had to do a bunch of comfortable scribbles until they "broke," a very slow scribble, a very fast one... and then a hundred in a row! And this was on large paper! I got Gabe and Carl to leave and did the whole thing. Then I collapsed... not really, but it was just amazing and exhausting and enlightening all at once...

S: Why scribbles?

M: That was the lowest level. Can you imagine? Like immersing yourself in dark chaos. I felt like an animal growling and clawing and dragging myself. I really got off on it.

C: A hint of what was to come, huh?

A small dream at the end of that week showed that I was beginning to personalize (or feminize?) the directions of my tree. From August 23: "I comment to Claudine about my pulls to different materials - how I love paint and some other things. I say it is as if I wore black sexy underwear one day but the next day I wanted pink flowered."

Here are some quotations from my journal, done immediately after the scribbles:

The fast faster fastest one:

"About 30 seconds 'til I got nauseous and tired out... I moved my right hand back and forth and up and down, pouncing my left fingers on and off, growling some, lifting my feet up and down one at a time; my head shook a lot."

From the 100 scribbles:

"It was HARD and EXHAUSTING. All kinds of moods and movements came out. Very primary primal primitive feeling. On some of the dark ones I felt crazy, animal-like... Most often my whole arm and body were in motion... It was a bottom line experience... The purely physical nature of this was not particularly scary to me. No thoughts of witchery, etc. More pure. Pure 'chaos,' like Dance Free. Very like it."

(See appendix for a bit more on Dance Free).

"But it is worth man's while to take pains with himself, and he has something in his soul that can grow."

C.G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy

"There is, I believe, a growing insight now that human beings may be their own laboratories. and may study themselves as representing conditions of their times... there is a new science of man being born out of individual spiritual activity and self observation."

Mary Caroline Richards in The Crossing Point

"If we wish to compress something, we must first let it fully expand."

Lao Tse quoted in the I Ching: Wilhelm edition, p. 127

M: I really had no idea what I was getting into. I mean, I was diving in and I really didn't know...

S: Maybe that's why you could do it... because you didn't know... but then, how did you get from those scribbles right through to your show? I mean, I remember your circle photographs and you talking about metal. But I hardly knew you in the fall...

Pushing Everything at Once

M: The fall! That first part or few months was so intense... funny I want to say awful It was awful and intense and I tried to do so much at once that I was sick I had flu twice I think, and strep throat, and by December I had eczema. Incredible!

C: Boston doesn't help though. You might have been sick anyway.

M: Not that much. I think I was trying to be superwoman or superworker or something. And Gabriel! Right when I was ready to delve into all my projects I had no time! I was so resentful... I had to wait weeks for nursery school to start and then we had that trauma with the nursery schools...

S: Trauma. Is that when you came to Parents? I thought...

M: "Trauma" is pretty heavy. but the first place Just felt like the army to us. It was weeks before we recovered from all that and I was trying to eke out bits of time in there - I'd drop Carl and Gabe off, whip over to my studio, paint or draw or stretch a canvas or go to the art store, and then whip back by noon to get him. It was ridiculous.

S: It doesn't sound ridiculous. It sounds like you had some courage to try to do this work at all...

M: But you can tell... I sound hysterical when I talk about it. The funniest thing is that I was doing big drawings, a whole series of

My roles often felt competitive with each other. How could I be a good mother and a "real" artist at the same time? Didn't real artists do art all the time? When I tried to put me and my work first, I would feel or fear my family was falling apart.

During the fall term, mostly during September, October, and November, I was carrying out several ongoing projects. I had allotted myself 2 - 2.5 hours per morning to work, during which time my then three year old son would be in nursery school. I would drop him off around 9:00 a.m. (needing to stay later in the early weeks), drive 10 - 15 minutes to my studio, work at one or two of the projects, and return to nursery school by 12:30 p.m. The rest of my day and evening was mostly family oriented time. I used a bit of it for journal keeping, and one evening per week for my glass class. I did not count on further cuts into my time: days when Gabriel was sick, difficulties with one school for him and new adjustment to a second, parent help days (the nursery school is a cooperative one), and later, days when I myself got sick/no doubt in response to trying to do too much. The funniest part, or most ironic, was that I often felt I wasn't getting anything done,

One theme that recurred in my dreams throughout these months was that of right and left. This one was unforgettable:

Sept. 8, 1980

"I dreamed of dark large crows or vultures almost attacking me. My left hand as well as foot hurt last night. I knew I'd have to let some 'evil' out. Too much dammed up energy. Very difficult.

"I drew some dark birds today... The claws are what I seem to want to draw - or experience. The beak attacking. The claws. The dark shadow over the earth...

"Strange hills in my dream. Soft topped, like sheep. I let these drawings be messy, scribbly, attack like. Moving the scribble energy upward into the symbol."

paintings... to top it off, Lowry had suggested I continue my own work and pull in the tree work to add to it... but I didn't have any work by then that was separate so I gave myself this project to do a series of cloud paintings, big ones, with moods extending like from the dark chaos up to the pink clouds and fluffy whites.

S: Wow...

C: They're great! Really sexy cloud paintings. And she never liked them. You're too vulnerable to criticism Mar.

M: Well I am. I mean now I feel like I can be more solid. I mean after my show (laughter).

S: Right. You can continue on your own way now.

M: But then I was vulnerable, I thought I had to decide what kind of artist I was and I decided "painter." But then I was never satisfied and always confused. And I was doing this new thing with color. I was starting to mix, at Lowry's suggestion, I was mixing colors that had resonance and depth to them by mixing up, by putting more colors in a color. When I first started doing the color mixing, he said, "Mix colors off your tree." My tree had all these, not only ranges of my psyche, but, materials. Drawn, but like ribbons and moss... so he was saying to mix a color that had the real feel of a substance that was on my tree.

S: Of each substance?

In a nutshell, here is what I was doing, related particularly to my directed study: Expanding my tree through drawings - several lines developed

1. darkness, scribble, dark birds

2. cloud drawings using paint, silvery

materials, later more collage materials

3. nest-bird drawings

4. dream drawings: dinosaurs mountains .birds

5. basement drawings beetle in drain cockroach drawings later observation drawings of cockroaches at MCZ (Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology).

Besides drawing, I was reading new material and rereading old material for personal connections. Included were a book on Plato, books by Jung, Marion Milner, Mary Caroline Richards, Mircea Eliade, and Lucy Lippard.

Jung writes about the left side:

Jung, p. 127, Psychology and Alchemy:

..a leftward movement is evil. The left, the 'sinister side', is the unconscious side. Therefore a leftward movement is equivalent to a movement in the direction of the unconscious, whereas a movement to the right is 'correct' and aims at consciousness...

"Clearly the left-hand path does not lead upwards to the kingdom of the gods and eternal ideas, but down into natural history, into the bestial instinctive foundations of human existence."

(See the appendix for my thoughts about the "dark side" at this point and some ideas on kinds of energy that I could tap there.)

M: Yeah, but I couldn't do it. For months all I would mix was colors to make good paintings out of, 'cause I was trying to be a good painter.

C: True?

M: Yes! I have lots of Jars of... they were better colors than I had mixed before... they have lots of depth. Various blues, none of which were "infinity blue," which I mixed later. Because the only color blue on my tree was infinity. It wasn't infinity; I didn't call it that. That blue up where the stars were. It was like a certain sense of, of an extremely deep blue that I had. Well I didn't mix that color to put in my cloud paintings. I mixed light blues, dark blues, cobalt blues, cerulean blues. But I didn't mix this one blue. As if you were going to mix one blue, and you worked really hard to mix that one blue that was, kinda like, inside you. I didn't do that for a long time, and I didn't even understand it. Right around Christmas I started playing around with that. I mixed slime green, 'cause that was under my alligator.

It was the first color I mixed that I had a feeling, that I had a physical feeling for - slime. I don't know why I mixed slime.

S: Slime. Was that like that color you used for the puddle of stuff coming from that bone shape?

M: Yes! Those things were really starting way back then. I mean way back then I was touching things that were germinal, that went under and popped back out full blown in my show.

I was going about color mixing in a conscious way - mixing enough different, often complementary pigments together to get more depth and resonance to my color. I was putting an ounce or so of each color into a jar and recording on the jar top every pigment (brand name included) that I had used to create the color.

Our whole family was working hard. We were all under stress and between the three of us had four bouts of flu, one bad ear infection, one case of strep throat and one long case of eczema - all between October and December. I was "pushing" so hard that I couldn't reflect. My journal from November 22 shows the pace and my lack of clarity.,

,
Nov. 22, 1980

. "I worked on my wild bird with her nest. And then two more line drawings of birds. One holding an egg hatching - what a wonderful feeling image...

" On Sunday night I came down with strep throat. Through Thursday I was really sick... but WHY? I had been 'working so hard' to 'turn up the steam.'

"And my other dream this week of Laurie Weiss. Me saying to her, 'What are you going to do with all those paintings?' (the weight, the bulk of them). She says, 'That's not the point! The point is the ideas that Lowry gives me. That's what's important.'

Meanwhile I was rebounding upwards, always conscious of where I was on my tree. On August 27 I recorded this dream: "I finally gave up and put glitter on top of heavy silver paint. I had had trouble before that." And on August 29 I wrote: "I played with silver. I used silver stars, silver rick rack, silver watercolor paint, and silver metallic paper... Very satisfying to play with silver and blue... I felt I had always loved that silver and that blue."

Really. Like the bone color. Not just the color... that was when I had that fantastic bone dream with my old art teacher in it. Another one of those "guidest" I've had... I was taking the glass class and something wasn't connecting and I had this great dream with two huge canvasses in it, one a bone and one a dinosaur.

S: Prehistoric stuff..

M: Yeah. It was one of those images. I was sick with strep throat and got up out of bed two or three times to draw this big dinosaur. It was so clear in my mind, I just let it out.

C: It was in her show later, near the dark stuff. Really ferocious looking.

M: It makes me dizzy, still, to think back then. I-mean I did that bug thing, the trapped one. I hated it, couldn't get it right. And Lowry said, "Fine, now get into some crackly black paint for the feel of him." I was having dreams like mad, some with bird images. Lots of bird images, Big Bird, funny birds near water... something off my nest part of the tree. I was following that too. The clouds, the nest, the bug.

S: What were the meanings of those? Did you understand them? I mean, what were you after?

M: Well, when I did the first nest I just sort of looked over my tree for a cozy place to start. I had already done a big ashpit drawing full of trash - the nest just felt so lyrical. It felt good... And I think I drew then some blow ups, birds in eggs,

"Dense clouds. No rain from our western region.

"I gave myself to the dense Guston like cloud painting. I mixed Jars of many blues and greys, a few cloud whites. The first oranges and reds I mixed were most eye-opening, connected to inner sense of parts of the tree except in that the blue greys were part of the extension of the white cloud into the lower more fearsome areas.

"What is wrong with cold colors, anyway? But I haven't given myself time or space to integrate Lowry's ideas into my being. Working from the head at a furious pace is ridiculous."

It's hard to tell what I was sick with when. Here is a journal entry from November 26 which includes the dinosaur dream. Note that the dream also contains a giant bone image, which re-emerges later in my work.

Nov. 26

"The day before Thanksgiving. I've been sick. Sick in body but sick too in mind... Some heavy repression on me for these moves forward, I guess.

"Yesterday's dream, Nov. 24 or 5 was a whopper.

"I am carrying an apron full of green glass scraps when I come upon D. Lund in a large open desecrated place with fallen buildings, rubble, openness. I ask if he's ever worked with glass. He doesn't respond. I start to babble about my thesis, how I can expand and then use things in my

See reproduction of my palette as I mixed resonant colors. Also, see reproduction of a cloud painting from this period.

See the reproduction of this dinosaur.

I later saw an interesting article on the artist C.W. Peale. It included a photo of him standing next to his large representational paintings of dinosaurs and bones.

When I did the dinosaur drawing I had a flash of insight - I thought, "Wow, the dinosaur is my alligator at the bottom of the tree root - but transformed by powerful aggressive energy." I imagined him as a dragon, breathing fire. And I had a sense of my alligator changed in the other direction - to a slow moving heavy dark creature... Just like those hippo images.

See the reproduction of the cockroach trying to crawl out of a basement drain, trapped by the metal...

The sense of something trapped and struggling to escape was a theme that had appeared in my work years earlier when I was a sophomore in undergraduate school... 1965'

womb-like, in enclosures. And I had this dream of a woman in a Chinese dress...

S: Chinese?

C: Probably 'cause we cast the Ching...

M: I don't know. It was blue and white... Chinese... and I was near her looking down at an enormous bird, like Big bird from "Sesame." And the bird was standing in water near its eggs, waiting for them to hatch. Or they're hatching. I don't remember.

C: Fantastic!

M: Why fantastic?

C: Because that's you. You were kind of incubating then...

M: That's what Lowry said. Around the end of November... I hardly ever saw him... every two months or so I brought in this stack of stuff - cloud watercolors he said looked like ice cream sundaes... the birds, a mountain dream, the bug, the dinosaur... tons of drawings...

C: She was doing all this stuff and always complaining that she had no time.

H: Anyway... Lowry looked at the drawing of Big Bird and the eggs and water and said something like, "Yes, your work is just below the surface; it is coming up." Something like that.

S: And you felt that too?

painting but I still can't tell if my paintings are any good or not. I confuse them with me. He's looking past me to his big 6'x6' or 10'x10' paintings in the landscape. One of Tyrannosaurus Rex with black and 9gey

urk in fror, tof him. The other of a bone shape with lots of black and grey murk. 80ne like Baziotes.

"So I drew Tyrannosaur w , a section - He is so MEAN. Very satisfying and easy but I had to sleep or rest in between parts. He has an evil gleam in his eye and you can hear him heckling.

"Today I am immobile."

On eggs and birds, from my journal at that time:

"Eggs. Enclosed shape. Curved, closed. Gestation. Females make and lay eggs. Where do eggs come from? Someone said my dinosaur drawing looked like he was "just hatched."

"Eggs. Easter. Jelly beans.

"How important my eggs are to me. Here many eggs are inside me. How many have passed out with blood since I was 13? Every month a good egg goes down the drain. Eggs connote pregnancy, fertility, creativity to me.

"The dream of Big Bird, a lady in blue and white floral Oriental dress, looking down at the eggs in the nest just beneath the water's surface. Lowry says my work is just below the surface, is being brought up.

Bachelard, in Poetics of Space, writes a whole chapter on rests, their meanings and resonances in us. See the appendix for some "nest" quotes that were especially meaningful to me.

From the I ChinB:

—
"The character fu ("truth") is actually the picture of a bird's foot over a fledgling. It suggests the idea of brooding. An egg is hollow. The light giving power must work to quicken it from outside, but there must be a germ of life within, if life is to be awakened."

M: I don't know what I felt. I was so vulnerable to what he said, what he criticized. I mean it sounded good. But I didn't know how to make it hatch or what to do next.

S: So what did you do?

M: Well, I don't know. I never could do much for a week or so after seeing Lowry...

C: She really couldn't. She'd botch everything.

M: Well I was doing the glass class, which was better by then. I put the dinosaurs and clouds together .and I kept mixing and then by Christmas Barb said I couldn't use the studio for a week. I had done these beautiful cards meanwhile... our living room looked like a cyclone had gone through... and I was a wreck when I couldn't go to my studio. A wreck! I wanted to finish my cloud paintings and I was very frustrated. I went down the basement and mixed those bone colors. And flesh. Metal...

"So much activity!"

I didn't give myself much time for walking in the woods, daydreaming, meditating, getting exercise... No wonder so much of my unconscious expansion then was happening at night, when I did rest.

